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BREEDS OF
LIGHT HORSES



THIS BULLETIN gives concise information regarding the breeds of light horses and will be particularly useful to farmers in those sections where light horses are preeminently fitted for farm work, such as mountainous and hilly sections and where there are markets for horses for saddle and driving purposes.

The breeds discussed are the Arabian, Thoroughbred, Standardbred, American Saddle, Morgan, Hackney, French Coach, German Coach, and Cleveland Bay. Of these, the Standardbred, American Saddle, and Morgan breeds were developed in this country. The origin, development, general appearance, and adaptability of the light breeds are discussed.

There is no best breed of light horses. Some breeds are superior to others in certain respects and one breed may be better adapted than another to certain local conditions. The general requirements for a particular section and the popularity of a certain breed in a certain locality should receive the utmost consideration in choosing a breed.

BREEDS OF LIGHT HORSES

By H. H. REESE,¹ *Animal Husbandman, Animal Husbandry Division, Bureau of Animal Industry*

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CHARACTERISTICS OF LIGHT HORSES

THE TERM "light" when applied to horses refers to that class which is intermediate in size between ponies and draft horses and which usually has more range, a greater degree of quality, better action, or greater speed than either. A majority of our light horses are from 15 to 16 hands high and weigh from 900 to 1,250 pounds. Breeds of light horses, then, refer to the groups within this class which have been bred pure for a particular purpose, individual ancestry having been recorded by a registry association.

Light horses are well adapted to mountainous sections and where the land is rolling, in which localities they are useful for farm horse power and for riding and driving purposes. It is in such sections that light horses should be bred and developed to supply the home demand.

The material presented herewith is intended to convey to the reader concise general information concerning the characteristics of the various breeds of light horses found in this country. An interesting study is afforded in noting the extent to which Arabian and Thoroughbred blood was used in founding many of the light breeds, and this relationship is briefly touched upon, but no attempt is made to give detailed information concerning early breed history. By communicating with the secretaries of the various breed associations, whose names are given, information regarding rules of registration, issuance of studbooks, and lists of breeders may be obtained. Farmers' Bulletin 619, "Breeds of Draft Horses," is available to those wishing information on the draft breeds.

ARABIAN

The oldest breed of horses generally recognized at present and the fountainhead of all our other light breeds was developed in the desert country of Arabia, from which it derives its name. Needing an animal that would carry him swiftly and safely over long stretches of sandy soil and at the same time withstand the lack of feed and water to a remarkable degree, the Arab developed a type of horse

¹ Revised by J. O. Williams, Senior Animal Husbandman in Horse and Mule Investigations, Animal Husbandry Division. Mr. Reese resigned Dec. 31, 1926.

that has long been noted for its activity, endurance, docility, and handsome appearance.

The Arabian horse (fig. 1), while primarily developed as a saddle horse and ridden by the Arabs at a canter, is easily broken to make a safe although not fast driver. He possesses the general characteristics desired in a saddle horse, viz, good carriage of head and neck; deep, well-sloped shoulders; a short back with proportionately long underline; wide and deep quarters; short, strong loin; tail attached high; compactness of middle; and superior quality of underpinning without any tendency to appear leggy.

A typical Arabian horse has a wedge-shaped head; small nose; dish face; deep, wide jaws; eyes set low, wide apart, and near the middle of the head: a relatively large brain capacity; one less lum-

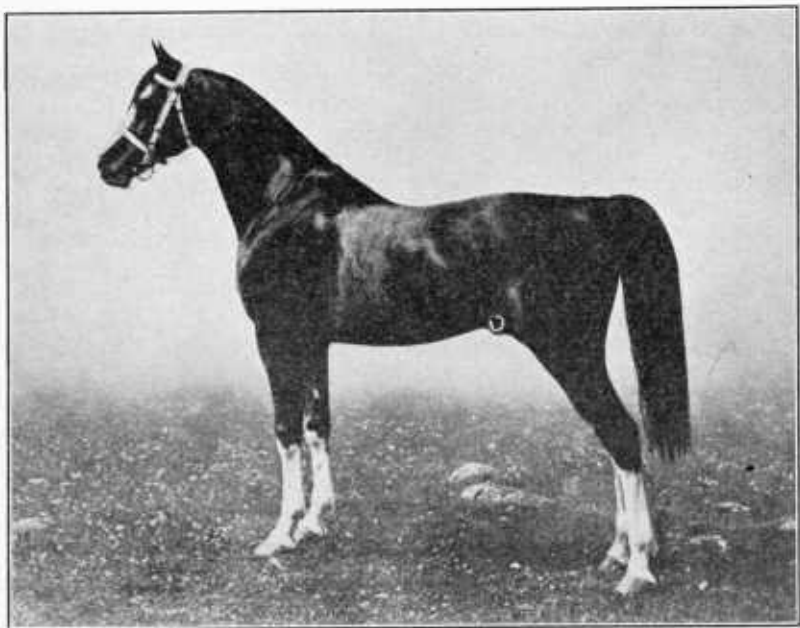


FIG. 1.—Arabian stallion

bar vertebra than most other horses, giving a short, weight-carrying back; one or two fewer vertebrae in the tail, which is set on a high croup and gaily carried; ribs sprung wide and deep; large knee, hock, tendon, and hoof; dense bone; small stomach capacity, with small feed requirement and the ability to assimilate rough feed; and a marked prepotency in the stud.

Generally the Arabian horse in action shows only the walk, trot, and canter. The usual height is 14 to 15.1 hands and the weight from 850 to 1,100 pounds. Bay, gray, and chestnut are the predominating colors, with an occasional white or black. White marks on the head and legs are common, but purebred Arabians are never piebald or spotted, notwithstanding an erroneous impression created by circus horses that are commonly called Arabians.

Crossed on farm mares, Arabian stallions have produced excellent saddle horses, but they frequently lack size when measured by our

present-day market requirements. However, admirers of the Arabian are very enthusiastic about his suitability for cavalry use, pointing out that his endurance and weight-carrying ability as demonstrated in recent endurance tests, his even temperament, and especially his ability to withstand hardships, such as scanty food on long marches, make him especially useful for this purpose.

The Arabian Horse Club of America, 1580 Woolworth Building, New York, N. Y., incorporated since 1908, publishes a studbook, the latest supplement to which shows a total of 733 registrations of animals living and dead.

THOROUGHBRED

The name "Thoroughbred" is applied properly only to the breed of running race horses produced originally in England. Three Arabian stallions are credited with having laid the foundation for



FIG. 2.—Thoroughbred stallion

this breed, their names being The Byerly Turk, The Darley Arabian, and The Godolphin Barb, and they produced the three famous racing families, Herod, Eclipse, and Matchem, respectively. The Thoroughbred has many features of the Arabian, most notable of which is the general refinement or "breediness" of appearance. The cross on English mares, however, and the selection for running speed has resulted in the Thoroughbred's being faster at the run, larger, and commonly more angular and upstanding than the Arabian. As a running race horse the Thoroughbred is without a peer. The canter is his best utility gait. Many specimens have a splendid walk, and the trot, while not showing extreme speed or knee action, is nevertheless often desirable for saddle use. Thoroughbreds are bay, brown, chestnut, black, or, less frequently, gray in color. Irregular and conspicuous white marks are not uncommon. A Thoroughbred stallion is shown in Figure 2.

Thoroughbreds are bred pure almost entirely for racing purposes, a certificate of registration with The Jockey Club being required for horses entered in races on the larger tracks. To instill quality and a more active temperament, animals of this breed are sometimes used to cross into other breeds. The use of Thoroughbred sires on mares of other than pure Thoroughbred blood is quite popular in certain sections, the resultant animals being commonly termed half-breds. Such horses find ready sale as hunters, saddle horses, and polo ponies. Many excellent officers' horses and cavalry horses are produced in this way. When of proper temperament and of sufficient size they have also been very satisfactory for general farm work on rolling land, gaining for themselves a reputation for stamina and endurance.

The Jockey Club, of which Fred J. E. Klees, 250 Park Avenue, New York, N. Y., is registrar, registers Thoroughbreds in this country. To December 31, 1929, 110,914 animals have been recorded. Most of our imported Thoroughbreds come from France and England, approximately 4,750 having been imported from these two countries since 1894; but horses of this breed are bred in other countries as well, showing that the breed enjoys a wide distribution. Fourteen volumes of the American Stud Book, published by the Jockey Club, have been issued, and volume 15 will be issued in 1931.

STANDARD BRED

The Standardbred (fig. 3) is an American breed developed primarily for extreme speed at the trot and pace. The term "American Trotting Horse" is also applied to this breed. Messenger, an imported Thoroughbred stallion, and imported Bellfounder, registered in the English Hackney Stud Book, were largely responsible for the foundation of this breed, as Rysdyk's Hambletonian, a stallion to which a vast majority of the horses of this breed trace, carried the blood of both. The ancestry of the pacer is not different from that of the trotter, but to-day some families produce a much larger proportion of pacers than others, while many individuals show speed at both gaits. Both trotters and pacers are registered in the same stud-book.

Horses of this breed do not show so much quality as the Thoroughbred, but usually have more substance, being heavier in proportion to their height. The ears, head, and bone particularly are coarser, and the hind legs are not quite so straight as in the Thoroughbred. In weight the Standardbred ranges from 900 to 1,300 pounds, and in height from 15 to 16 hands, but the best specimens are often around 15.2 and weigh about 1,100 pounds in good driving condition.

These horses are bred pure largely with the intention of producing extreme trotting or pacing speed for racing purposes. Individuals not inheriting speed have frequently been able to fill utility places on account of their size, wearing qualities, and good dispositions. This is equally true of those carrying half or more Standardbred blood, as they have been used in large numbers as general-purpose farm horses; they predominate as roadsters or driving horses and as light delivery-wagon horses. Occasionally excellent heavy-harness horses have been trotting bred. Durable cavalry horses frequently carry this blood, and when of sufficient size this blood pro-

duces the best light-artillery horses to be found in this country in any considerable number and coming from a known source. On account of their versatility, horses of trotting-bred ancestry have been very popular here, and foreign countries have paid some very attractive prices for Standardbred breeding stock, especially stallions.

The American Trotting Register Association, of which Charles E. Koons, Goshen, N. Y., is secretary, promotes the interest of the Standardbred and records purebred animals. Twenty-six volumes



FIG. 3.—Standardbred stallion

of the studbook of this association have been issued, and more than 70,000 stallions and 200,000 mares have been recorded.

AMERICAN SADDLE

The early residents of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia found horses with easy gaits to be the most desirable to ride over plantations, semimountainous grazing farms, and on long journeys. In the preference for such gaits they laid the foundation for and promoted the pioneer development of the American Saddle horse. Sections of Missouri also soon took up the breeding of easy-gaited saddle horses, and to-day this State ranks next to the mother State (Kentucky) in the production of high-class individuals.

Thoroughbred, Morgan, and Canadian blood form the basis for this breed. The American Saddle Horse Breeders' Association recognized the following horses as foundation stock of the breed previous to April 10, 1908: Denmark, by Imported Hedgeford; John Dillard; Brinker's Drennon; Sam Booker; Tom Hal; Coleman's Eureka; Van Meter's Waxy; Cabell's Lexington; Copperbottom; Stump-the-Dealer; Texas; Prince Albert; Peter's Haleorn; Varnon's Roebuck; and Davy Crockett. At present Denmark alone is recognized as foundation stock.

The chief distinguishing characteristics of the American Saddle horse (fig. 4) are the gaits which are known as the rack or single-foot (a rather fast, cultivated gait intermediate in movement between the trot and the pace), the fox trot, the running walk, and the slow pace (the last three being commonly referred to as the slow



FIG. 4.—American Saddle gelding

gaits, any one of them being accepted as the slow gait of a five-gaited saddle horse). The other gaits demanded in a horse of this type are the canter, the trot, and the walk. The demand for harness, combination, and walk-trot-canter saddle horses has caused many dealers and breeders to pay particular attention to the development of a balanced, fairly high, and swift trot.

Members of this breed are usually bay, brown, chestnut, or black, and most of them stand from 15 to 16 hands high and weigh from 1,000 to 1,200 pounds.

Much interest has always been manifested by the breeders of Kentucky and Missouri in showing their horses and colts at county and State fairs, and this is undoubtedly responsible in a large measure for the constant selection in this breed for animals with a great deal of quality, unusual style, and fine dispositions. Fine harness show horses frequently possess saddle blood. Those without the easy gaits

but with quality and desirable saddle conformation are sold as three-gaited saddle horses for park and show purposes. Heavy-harness horses have occasionally come from this breed, while five-gaited saddle horses seldom come from any other blood. At the present time American Saddle horses are being bred pure in practically every State in the Union, and many are sold to Cuba, as well as to other countries.

The American Saddle Horse Breeders' Association, the organization recording purebred animals of this breed, reports 11,337 stallions and 19,046 mares registered to January 1, 1930. Nine volumes of the studbook have been issued, and almost a sufficient number of entries to complete volume 10 have been received. Roger H. Lillard, 301-2 Urban Building, Louisville, Ky., is secretary of the association.

MORGAN

The Morgans have sometimes been considered a family of the Standardbred, but as these horses have been bred more for their utility qualities than for speed, and as their characteristics are well established and perpetuated with marked regularity, it is proper to consider them as a distinct breed. The early development of the Morgans took place in the New England States, thus giving this country the credit of founding three light breeds. The foundation of the Morgan breed is attributed to a single stallion named Justin Morgan, a horse of remarkable prepotency. Very little is definitely known of his ancestry. One investigator collected evidence showing that he was sired by the Thoroughbred stallion True Briton, also called Beautiful Bay, a horse that traced in direct male line to The Byerly Turk, and had many other traces of Arabian blood. Another investigator contends that he was sired by a Dutch horse, which in turn came from Arabian stock. Which of these theories is correct is not important to-day. The presence of only five lumbar vertebrae in many Morgans supports both theories of Arabian foundation.

Morgans are generally chestnut, brown, bay, or black in color, white marks not being common. Fifteen hands might be given as the average height, with the average weight around 1,000 pounds, but, as in all breeds, considerable variation may be found, 16 hands in height, with 1,200 pounds in weight, occasionally being obtained. This breed has always been noted for smooth lines, good style, easy-keeping qualities, endurance, and docility, the latter not, however, being obtained at a sacrifice of ambition and courage. Small ears, good eyes, with great width between them, crested necks, well-sprung ribs, with the last one close to the point of the hip, deep barrels, fairly level croups, full quarters, and enduring legs and feet are the qualities that have made Morgan horses popular for nearly a century. They have good natural knee action, with considerable speed at the trot, some families having contributed materially to the up-building of the Standardbred. Others showing more saddle characteristics have exerted a marked influence on the American Saddle horse. The demand for saddle horses continues to be normal, and Morgan breeders should keep this market in mind. A Morgan stallion is shown in Figure 5.

These horses were used almost exclusively as general-purpose farm horses in the New England States in the early days, as well as in other sections. To-day Morgans are distributed over the important farming sections of this country, and they have succeeded in mak-

ing for themselves a reputation for hardiness, soundness, and usefulness.

Though the craze for trotting speed and the subsequent lack of demand for driving horses nearly resulted in the Morgan's being temporarily forgotten, his friends have never lost faith in him and have never evaded an opportunity to exploit his good qualities. Recently Morgan breeding has become quite popular in some sections, the Morgan Horse Club being an outcome of this movement. This club is endeavoring to preserve the good qualities of the Morgan through united effort of its members, and its object is analogous to that of the Department of Agriculture in its work in the regeneration of the Morgan horse.

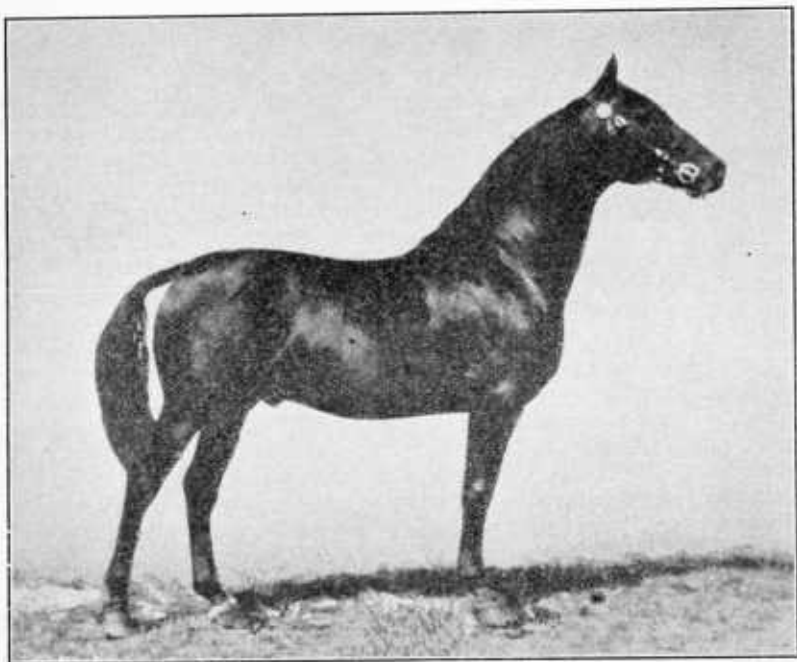


FIG. 5.—Morgan stallion

The Morgan Horse Club (Inc.), 120 Broadway, New York, N. Y., publishes the American Morgan Horse Register. Four volumes of the register have been published and a fifth volume will be issued in 1930. To December 31, 1929, 7,683 stallions and 4,640 mares had been recorded.

HACKNEY

The first driving horses used in England of which much is known were the Norfolk trotters, they being the result largely of breeding Norfolk mares to Thoroughbred stallions, thus giving the foundation for the Hackney breed.

This breed, judging from its best individuals, presents a striking illustration of the high degree to which the horse-breeding art may

be carried, for many of them are wonderful specimens of horseflesh, combining extremely high all-round trotting action and fair speed with abundant substance and quality. For showing in heavy harness the Hackney is without a close rival, most of the show horses of this class at the present time belonging to this breed. Purebred and grade Hackneys also furnished many of the utility carriage horses when this type was in demand. Crossed with trotting-bred mares, Hackney stallions have sired many high-class carriage horses in this country. Most of the demand at present for heavy-harness horses is for show purposes, and to meet this Hackneys are usually bred pure. A Hackney stallion is shown in Figure 6.

The versatility of the Hackney is illustrated by the fact that many successful hunters and jumpers are half-bred Hackneys. The

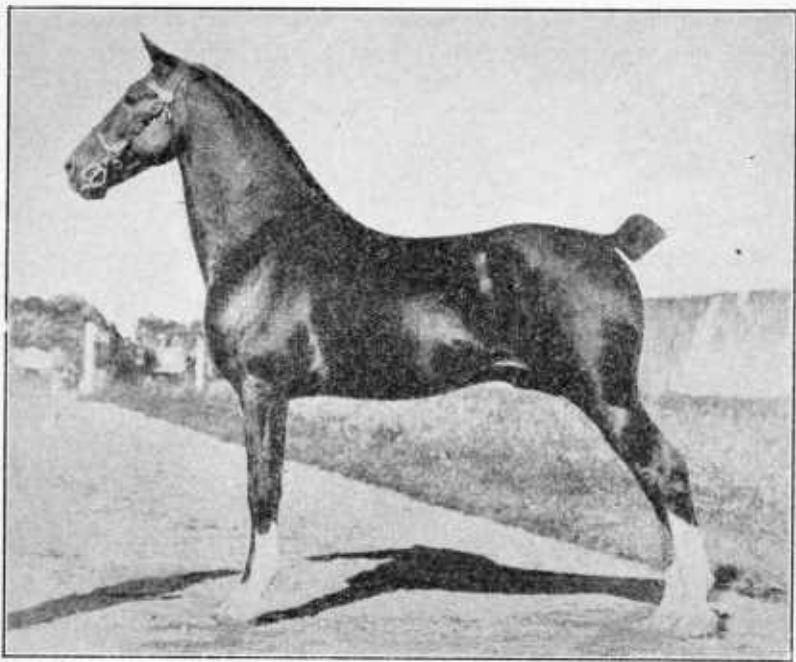


FIG. 6.—Hackney stallion

world's-record-holding high jumper, Great Heart, with a record of 8 feet $\frac{13}{16}$ inch, was sired by a registered Hackney, as was the previous holder of that record, Confidence.

Chestnut, bay, and brown are the most common colors found in the Hackney breed, although roans and blacks are seen. Regular white marks are rather common. In the show ring and also for distinctive carriage use, Hackneys are usually docked and have their manes pulled. In size the Hackney varies more than any other light breed. The small Hackney pony, 14.2 hands and under, and the 16-hand Hackney horse are registered in the same studbook. Hackneys are heavy in proportion to their height when compared with other light breeds, their deep chests, well-sprung ribs, low flanks, and heavy croups and quarters producing weight. The large Hack-

ney sometimes is lacking in general quality, but this is not true of the best specimens, and certainly would not be a just criticism of those standing around 14.2 to 15 hands.

While, as previously stated, the Hackney possesses desirable heavy-harness action to a greater degree than any other breed, much of this action is developed by skilled training, biting, and shoeing.

The association in this country devoted to the interests of the Hackney breed is the American Hackney Horse Society, of which Gurney C. Gue, Merrick, N. Y., is secretary. This society publishes the American Hackney Stud Book, in which, to February 1, 1930, 2,291 stallions and 4,099 mares have been recorded.

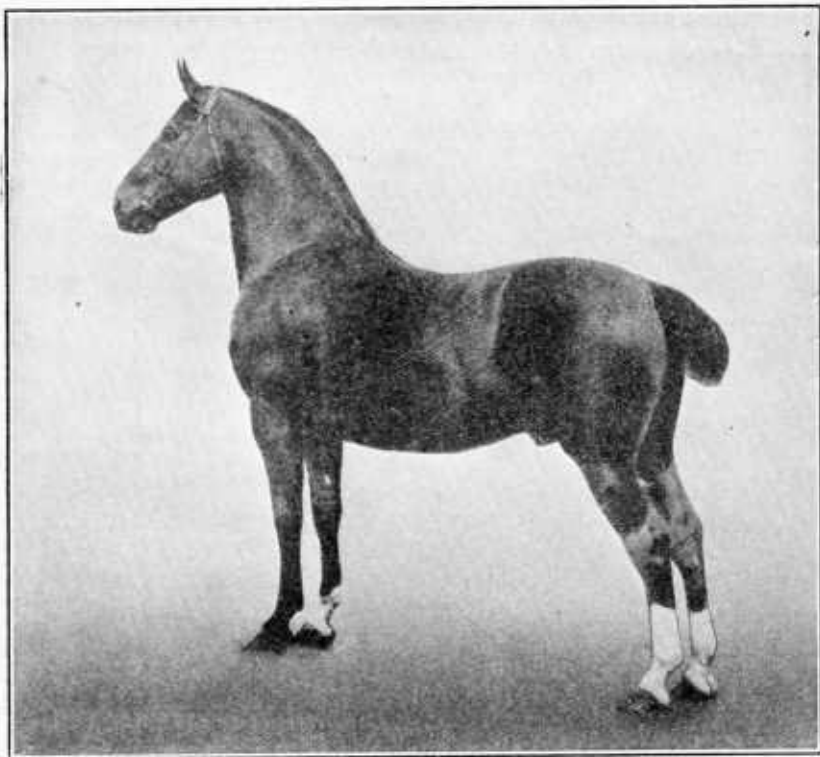


FIG. 7.—French Coach stallion

FRENCH COACH

The term French Coach is used in this country to designate horses produced in France largely by Government aid and with the special object of obtaining animals especially well suited for military purposes. Such horses are not known as French Coach in their native country, but are termed Demi-Sang (half-bred). In this country the term half-bred is applied to horses of half or more Thoroughbred blood, and as the French use the term in a similar sense an idea of the ancestry of this breed is furnished, it being the result largely of crossing Thoroughbred stallions on mares of desirable conformation, their breeding being of minor consideration.

This system of breeding often resulted in an animal of beautiful lines, with size, substance, style, and quality. In their selection of breeding stock for producing this class of horses, the French have laid a great deal of emphasis on a strong, enduring trot.

While the French Coach horse (fig. 7) is not so large on an average as the German Coach, many of the specimens stand around 15.3 to 16 hands and weigh 1,100 to 1,300 pounds, but fairly broad variations from these figures are to be noted. In color these horses are generally bay or brown, but chestnuts and blacks are seen. White marks are not common and are rarely extensive.

It is no wonder that these horses appealed to the American importer, with the result that the stallions especially were brought to this country in considerable numbers. As a harness horse, which was the field of equine activity assigned to the French Coach when he reached this country, he has been very commendable, and some of his get bred here have been successful in prominent shows. On account of their mixed ancestry, however, French Coach stallions do not always get the kind of colts that would be expected when crossed on our mares. Lately no stallions of that breed have been imported into the United States, and the pure breeding of this stock in this country is very limited.

The French Coach Horse Society of America keeps records of purebred horses of this breed in this country. Two volumes of the French Coach Stud Book have been issued, and 2,384 stallions and 840 mares have been recorded. The secretary of the Association is Duncan E. Willett, Maple Avenue and Harrison Street, Oak Park, Ill.

GERMAN COACH

Germany, with the object of producing a large, strong, and active horse that would be especially well adapted to carrying the German soldier and his heavy equipment and to hauling artillery, established the breed of horses known in this country as the German Coach (fig. 8). In Germany there are several distinct breeds of such horses, each of which is registered in a separate studbook.

The German Coach horse is said to have an infusion of Thoroughbred blood, but the present-day types do not show much of it. He lacks quality and is the most phlegmatic of the light breeds, and is also the heaviest, often weighing over 1,400 pounds and standing over 16 hands high. But few specimens of this breed show a tendency to trappy action, and practically no attempt has been made to produce a fast trot. In color this breed is all that could be desired, most of the specimens being beautiful rich bays and browns, with some blacks. White marks are seldom conspicuous and often are absent altogether. As a general-purpose farm horse and as a heavy-harness horse the German Coach at one time gained considerable popularity in this country, but in general the stallions do not "nick" well with our mares, and their use has been practically discontinued.

The German, Hanoverian, and Oldenburg Coach Horse Association of America promotes the interests of this breed in this country and issues registration papers for German Coach horses of approved breeding. There have been recorded by this association 2,955 stal-

lions and 588 mares, and two volumes of the studbook have been issued. J. Cronch, La Fayette, Ind., is secretary of the association.

CLEVELAND BAY

Although little is definitely known concerning the foundation of the Cleveland Bay breed, it is generally conceded that Thoroughbred blood played an important part in giving the Cleveland Bay many of its desirable characteristics. The early development of horses of this type, which were selected for bay color with practically no white, took place largely on the pastured Cleveland hills of York-

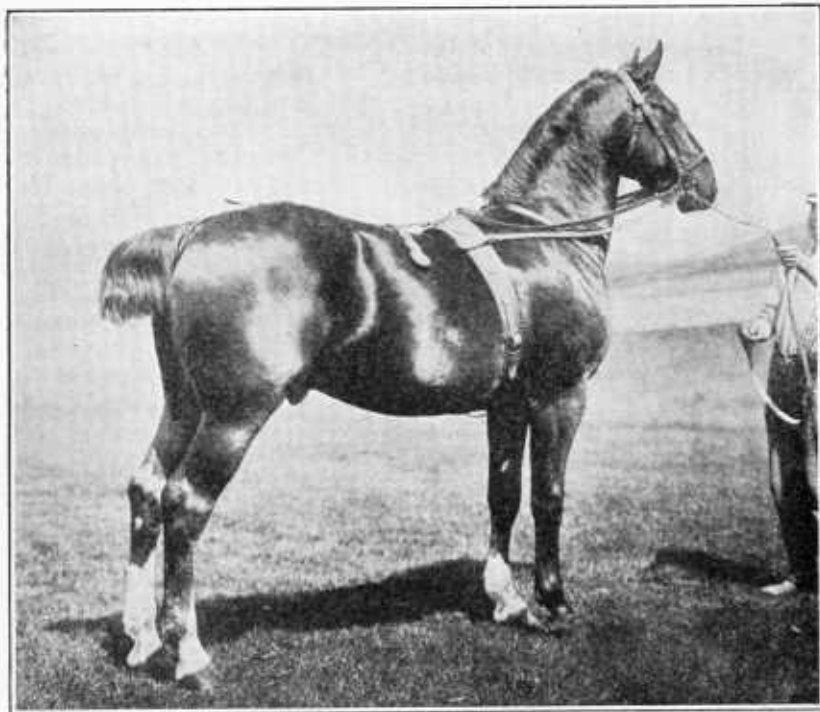


FIG. 8.—German Coach stallion

shire County, England, the color sought and the locality being responsible for the breed name. In England the Yorkshire Coach is considered a separate breed from the Cleveland Bay, but in this country they are registered in the same studbook.

Members of this breed are always bay in color. A small star and a few white hairs on the heels are permitted, but more conspicuous white marks are considered objectionable. The mane, tail, and legs are black. This is probably the tallest of the coach breeds, some specimens standing 16.3 hands high. The tendency to be upstanding or leggy is apparent, and a lack of quality has been a common criticism. The Cleveland Bay has a powerful trotting stride, with fair road speed. Figure 9 shows a Cleveland Bay stallion.

Horses of this breed were formerly seen in some of our larger shows, but probably, partly at least, on account of a lack here of favorable conditions for such a type they have not gained in popularity and are now seldom shown. In sections where hunters are

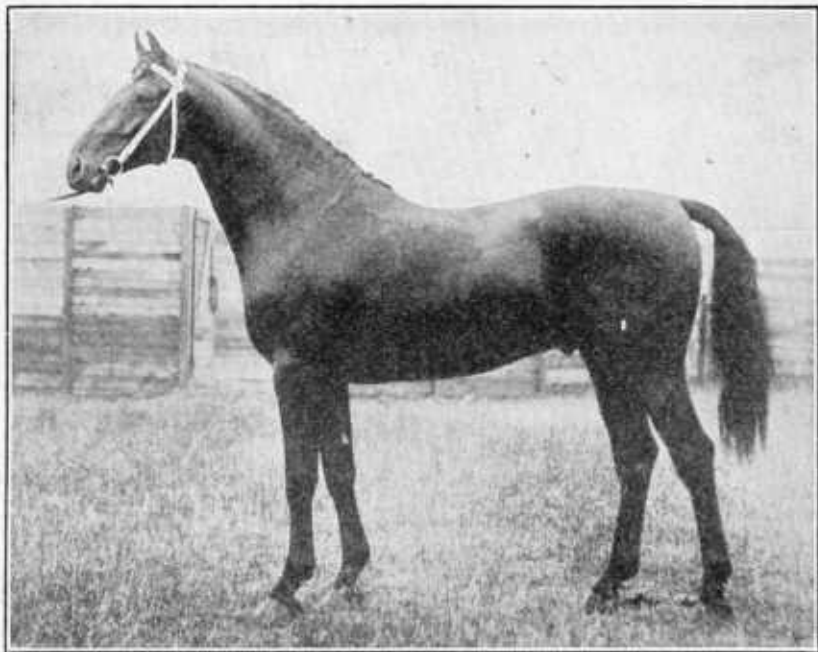


FIG. 9.—Cleveland Bay stallion

raised, mares of this breed may be found desirable to breed to medium-sized Thoroughbred stallions, as they have in England.

The Cleveland Bay Society of America records and issues certificates of pedigrees for this breed. There have been recorded by this society 1,280 stallions and 550 mares. R. P. Stericker, 72 West Adams Street, Chicago, Ill., is secretary.

